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## A PERSONAL VIEW

# Whole-school guidance?

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**ABSTRACT** *The present status of guidance as a whole-school feature of the British secondary school is explored. The ingredients and issues in the development of such an approach are clarified. The status and terminology of 'cross-curricular' initiatives are examined. The need for re-asserting the rationales for guidance within an overarching whole-school view of pupils' personal-social development is suggested. Finally, a new window of opportunity for schools is identified in recent developments regarding the National Curriculum in England.*

### **The need for a whole-school approach**

It has been evident for some time that the effective provision of personal, social and vocational guidance in UK schools was facing a new set of challenges. Since the introduction of a statutory testing system based on school subjects, and a range of other pressures on schools' budgets, the possibilities of increasing fragmentation and marginalisation of guidance provision have been clear.

The forces which encourage fragmentation cannot be overcome by guidance specialists on their own. Many recent Government initiatives are founded on underlying fears—fear that Britain is not competitive in the world, fear that our children are not achieving, fear that someone's views will morally contaminate the young. Fears are best combatted by collaborative approaches in various communities, especially the school community. Collaboration and collegiality may also combat another feature of the education system—its increasingly excluding nature. Some pupils, some pupils' experiences, and some teachers find themselves on the outside of what is officially valued.

In the guidance field, the need has always been to develop a comprehensive, developmental and distributed model (see Fig. 1). In the present context, this need has been powerfully highlighted. One aspect of such a model is its endemic nature. It needs to be seen, in part at least, as a strand of the core activities of school. It must describe both the specialist dimension of guidance and the general dimension. It is the expression of both of these which represents the present challenge for pastoral care and for personal-social education.

This is no new idea: essentially it updates the idea of the school as a guidance community (Rowe, 1975). Nor is it peculiar to UK: recent research in Canada (Levi & Ziegler, 1991) has shown that 'good guidance is total school guidance', meaning

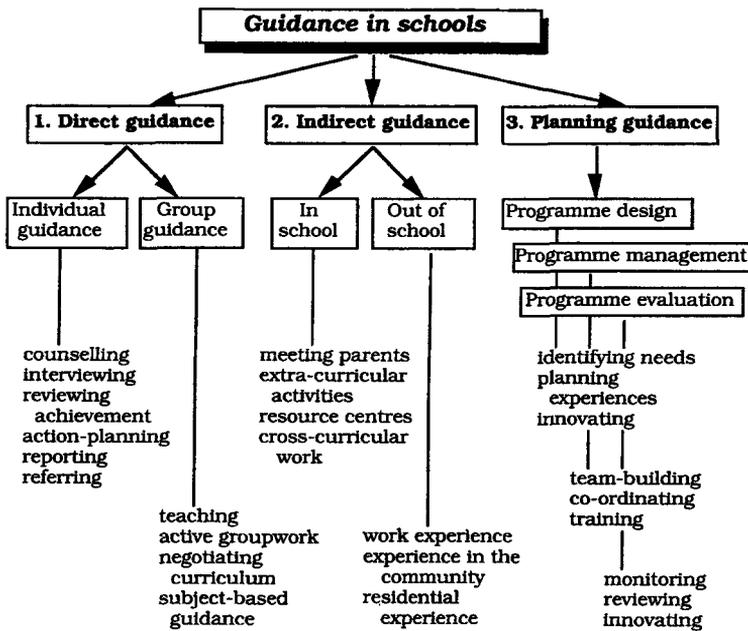


FIG. 1. Elements in whole-school guidance.

that it receives strong support, contributes to the atmosphere, permeates the curriculum, and includes a proactive developmental programme, collaboratively planned and delivered. In Hong Kong, efforts are being made to move away from crisis-orientation in highly pressurised schools, towards a 'whole school approach to guidance' (Hong Kong Education Department, 1990; Hui, 1991). Some writers in the USA have also been adopting and developing such an approach (Gysbers, 1993). Closer to home, the Scottish approaches to guidance (Fletcher, 1980) have been identified as an aspect contributing to the effectiveness of the whole school (HMI/SED, 1988).

An embedded model for the school needs to encompass the process and content of teaching. It was important that SCAGES (the Standing Conference of Associations for Guidance in Educational Settings) included this in its definition of guidance, defining 'teaching' as 'providing a planned and systematic progression of learner-centred experiences to enable learners to acquire knowledge, skills and competences related to making personal, educational and career decisions and transitions'.

There remains, of course, a need for such an overall view to be informed and complemented by the activity of specialists in guidance, who are key players in developing the practice of others.

### Whole-curriculum initiatives

Secondary schools in England and Wales have been grappling with the idea of 'cross-curricular themes' (National Curriculum Council, 1990). The five 'themes' include some key areas of guidance, including careers education and health education. However, the meaning of the term 'cross-curricular' varies considerably from place to place: it might mean 'addressed in all subjects'; it might mean 'covered in a few subjects'; I have seen schools where it means 'done in a special timetabled slot called "cross-curricular"! Each of these is a reduced version of what it should mean for such an important area as guidance. It is important to adopt a whole-curriculum view which identifies and co-ordinates contributions from all aspects of the school, not merely those things called subjects. It is also important to recognise the contribution made from tutoring of groups and of individuals. This is not helped by adopting a subject-based starting point and then trying to paste something across it. The Dearing (1993) report has identified such an approach as a basic problem with the development of the National Curriculum between 1988 and 1993.

For some aspects of learning, every occasion in school has a contribution to make, and for these a whole-curriculum approach is required. For more limited aspects, it may be that agreements between appropriate departments are sufficient. Rather than use the term 'cross-curricular' (which presumes the idea of an already existing curriculum) I prefer the less ambiguous term 'inter-subject themes'. Thus we have:

All locations → *whole-curriculum dimensions* → whole-school policy  
 Some locations → *inter-subject themes* → departmental agreements

Evidence is now becoming available on the overall picture regarding these themes (Whitty & Rowe, 1993; Whitty *et al.*, 1993). Only 11% of schools have adopted the five themes as policy or planning divisions for their curriculum, and the different themes are being handled in different ways. Those with a history and tradition (careers education and health education) are often found in a timetabled PSE course; environmental education tends to be shared out between geography and science; economic and industrial understanding is 'permeated' through the greatest number of subjects; and citizenship is hard to find (in English secondary schools, that is—it does not apply in Wales, where 'community studies' is chosen).

Evidence is also starting to emerge that even the well-supported themes such as careers education are being squeezed from the timetable (NACGT/ICG, 1993), and that health education is being increasingly marginalised (Health Education Authority, 1993).

But at the same time we are now getting evidence that guidance is more effective through PSE than through subjects. Eiser *et al.* (1988) conclude that:

Preventive education on matters such as smoking is more effective when the personal-social dimension is addressed. The implications of the school effects appear to show that smoking rates were significantly lower where the

school gave a relatively high profile to social/health education as a firm, separate and important curriculum area.... The differences in smoking rate are such as to indicate that lessons embedded in social/health education curriculum seem more successful.

Also, Balding & Bish (1992) report that they have 'unearthed a number of results which seem to indicate that drinking rates are lower in schools where alcohol education is delivered through PSE [and] are higher if the programme is delivered through Science'.

Rather than turn these findings into a reason for more in-fighting in the curriculum, I would argue that the particular strengths of PSE courses are effective within a co-ordinated and valued whole-curriculum picture (Watkins, 1993). This raises two important arenas for work:

- (a) at the national level, an improved emphasis on the personal and social elements of education and guidance which has been lacking in most Government pronouncements (Watkins, 1994);
- (b) at the school level, an improved approach to co-ordination, with all the structural, resource and priority issues this raises (Watkins, 1992).

I believe it is only now that some schools are coming to grips with the notion of co-ordination. For the past decade, the secondary school's habitual response to a problem has been to throw a co-ordinator at it. Many of these have been keen young teachers, more often than not women, given a minimal allowance and a set of roller skates to get off round the corridors: lots of responsibility but no power.

The role of any co-ordinator can be made impotent by the following:

1. Give them no structure to work in.
2. Give them no budget.
3. Give them no symbolic support from senior managers.
4. Subject them to wholesale 'role-sending': 'You're the expert: your job is to do it', 'You're stealing time from me', 'You're just a co-ordinator: I'm the real thing', 'We need someone to do this—you'll do'.
5. Make sure you never make a clear statement about their role and what it is meant to achieve.

Without the structural changes I have outlined above, there will continue to be a range of burned-out co-ordinators on our school corridors.

But I am also aware that, for some, being a co-ordinator is not an attractive prospect. I have met a number of careers teachers who clearly did not want to be careers co-ordinators, just as sometimes I meet PSE co-ordinators who want to be the PSE teacher, and Heads of Year who cannot really imagine delegating and co-ordinating. I attribute the cause of such phenomena to the historical socialisation of teachers into their roles, rather than there being a defensible rationale which promotes and links to the central principle of pupil development and learning.

### Re-asserting the rationale

The task in this area is to seek a whole-curriculum approach which is genuinely whole-pupil, which relates to their needs (Gallagher *et al.*, 1992), and which covers time-honoured rather than politically fashionable themes. I have been promoting the following structure of headings:

- bodily self
- sexual self
- social self
- vocational self
- moral/political self
- self as a learner
- self in the organisation (Watkins, 1992).

This structure creates a whole-pupil view, encompasses cultural and gender differences, and implies a role for the teacher as helping pupils to *reflect on* social development and influences.

A whole-school approach means recognising, clarifying, communicating and co-ordinating all the elements of guidance:

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|----------------------|---|
| Organisational level | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the ethos and messages of the school</li> <li>• the opportunities the school offers</li> </ul>       |
| Classroom level      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all subject lessons</li> <li>• specialist guidance lessons</li> <li>• tutorial group work</li> </ul> |
| Individual level     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tutor guidance</li> <li>• specialist staff guidance</li> <li>• other adult guidance</li> </ul>       |

Each element can be analysed in terms of *its contribution to a pupil's self-development*.

The challenge now is to integrate this with what may be termed 'the classroom as a guidance community'. There are indicators of movement in this direction. HMI (1992) identified the following characteristics of good guidance in the context of the curriculum:

- teachers recognising that they can have a guidance role;
- schemes of work containing references, as appropriate, to guidance;
- teachers knowing their students well, and recognising and acting upon any suitable opportunity to offer guidance to students individually and collectively;
- ensuring that PSE, careers education and tutorial work systematically raise and focus on matters relating to guidance.

This augurs well for an integration of subject tutoring and personal tutoring (Watkins & Thacker, 1993).

There are of course a range of features which will work against this task, and which we need to anticipate. These include the pace of change: it is this as much as anything which keeps the occupational culture of teachers in its divided and stressed

state, despite the advances which were noticeable in the early 1980s. They also include the rhetoric of the right: for example, Prime Ministerial statements in favour of what is sometimes called a 'return to traditional teaching methods'. This flies in the face of evidence about educational needs and educational effectiveness, including that from the CBI (1992) survey which showed that young people in post-16 education wanted, and saw employers as wanting, interpersonal and group-work skills which they did not always get from their teaching.

A range of practitioners in the broad areas of guidance will have to work together in many more ways, and in more effective ways than in the past, at school level and beyond. The challenge is to come out of the corners of the historical specialisms and together to make the notion of 'curriculum infusion' something more than a slogan, and at the same time to argue the evidence for some identifiable provision (Watkins, 1993). That is needed at school level mainly, but beyond school too.

Increasingly the focus for change is the school, the governors, the school goals, the policies, the development plans. Some schools are already becoming more confident, proactive, planful places, though other schools are in disarray and division. It is crucial that guidance, tutoring, PSE, pastoral care regularly appear in the goals, the policies and the plans, and that guidance is managed in an effective way for the whole organisation—proactive and personal.

### **A window of opportunity?**

An extra opportunity has been created by the interim report of Sir Ron Dearing's review of the national curriculum (Dearing, 1993). The proposals, which were immediately accepted by Government, are for a period of greater stability, for the excessive prescription of the National Curriculum to be removed, and for a revised approach to assessment.

The clear message that the National Curriculum is not the whole curriculum is supported by the proposal to occupy 75–80% of teaching time on statutory National Curriculum and religious education in the early years of secondary school, and a more flexible curriculum in the later years. As the report states: 'The time released by slimming down the statutorily prescribed content of curriculum would be used to [amongst others] cover issues such as health education and careers education' (para. 3.29).

I take the view that the Dearing proposals offer a breathing space for schools, in which they may take a more rational and less pressured look at their curriculum offer and the contribution to guidance which it makes. Improved whole-school thinking is possible, including the guidance dimension of the whole curriculum. The statement 'we can't do health/careers/PSE because of the National Curriculum', which in my experience was more often anticipated than heard, and which was always a mis-attribution, is now more clearly erroneous.

Notwithstanding this window of opportunity, Government changes in areas other than curriculum will continue to affect the quality of school life. Change is occurring in the climate of schools, generally and particularly. School climate may

be difficult to assess, but it is fundamentally important in a discussion of guidance. Some schools are becoming more competitive, both within themselves and in their stance towards others, more parochial in their goals and their view of their role, and less accepting—as shown through the increasing number of exclusions, for example. If this were the picture in all schools, it would be extremely worrying. In poorly managed schools the needs of the institution take precedence over the needs of the pupils, and the possible increase in some aspects of school autonomy encourages some schools to take on the characteristics of closed systems. In such circumstances the climate, the curriculum, and the relations with pupils' worlds will suffer, and the guidance offer is likely to remain marginal.

In the next period, schools' approaches to guidance provision will doubtless continue to differ, and perhaps such differences will increase. But there will be a new opening for whole curriculum considerations and for schools to clarify their provision in this area. We must be ready to seize the opportunities this will offer.

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